ECLIPSE

MIRACLEMAN

№1 75¢/U.K. 50p CAN. $1.00

REBIRTH

— — by ALAN MOORE and GARRY LEACH

BOOK ONE CHAPTER 1:

1956

AN AGE OF LINGERING INNOCENCE, AN AGE OF GOLDEN DREAMS, AN AGE FOR THE ...

MIRACLEMAN FAMILY

THE **FUTURE**: WHAT WILL IT BE LIKE? CAN EVEN **THE MIGHTIEST MEN IN THE UNIVERSE** PROTECT US FROM ITS ONSLAUGHT?

IT IS *1981*, 25 YEARS IN OUR FUTURE, AND *KOMMANDANT GARRER* OF THE *SCIENCE GESTAPO* IS SCHEMING WITH HIS *ATOMIC STORM TROOPERS*...

BAH! THE *UNITED EARTH GOVERNMENT* FOIL OUR PLANS TO ENSLAVE THE WORLD OF *TODAY!* LET US BOARD OUR *CHRONO CRUISERS* AND GO TO CONQUER THE WORLD OF *YESTERDAY!*

SET THE CONTROLS FOR **1956**! OUR **TECHNICAL SUPERIORITY** WILL **CRUSH** THOSE **PRIMITIVES**! WHY, THEY HAVEN'T EVEN DISCOVERED **EXON RAYS** YET!

HA HA HA!

ROAR

BEWARE, GOLDEN AGE OF THE **PAST**! A **FUTURISTIC DOOM** APPROACHES!

IN **1956**, YOUNG **JOHNNY BATES** IS OUT WALKING...

HMM! GETTING **LATE**! I'D BETTER **HURRY** IF I'M TO BE BACK AT THE **ORPHANAGE** BEFORE **DARK**!

SUDDENLY....

RAM BOM

HOLY MACARONI! WHAT ON EARTH WAS THAT?

I'LL BET IT MEANS **INNOCENT PEOPLE** ARE IN **TROUBLE**...

...AND **THAT** MEANS I COULD BE **NEEDED**!

IT IS GARRER AND HIS ARMY WHO HAVE LANDED!

WOW! GET A LOAD OF THAT!

A PORT OPENS, AND...

BOW, UNDERLINGS! BOW TO YOUR NEW MASTERS— OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!

BUT THE *LOCALS* SEEM MORE *AMUSED* THAN ALARMED...

HA HA! *SPACE ROCKETS*, JUST LIKE IN *DAN DARE*! MUST BE A *HOAX*!

SO! YOU THINK OUR *CHRONO-CRUISERS* ARE A *JOKE*? LET'S SEE IF OUR *EXON RAYS* AMUSE YOU AS *MUCH*!

BLIMEY! WHAT SORT OF WEAPON IS *THAT*?

YOU *SEE*? AS WE DESTROY YOUR *HOMES*, SO SHALL WE DESTROY *YOU*!

KNEEL, PRIMITIVES, BEFORE THE *SCIENCE GESTAPO*!

HOLY MACARONI! LOOKS LIKE I GOT HERE JUST IN *TIME*!

MIRACLEMAN!

UPON SPEAKING HIS HERO'S *NAME*, JOHNNY BATES IS TRANSFORMED BY *ATOMIC POWER* INTO *KID MIRACLEMAN*!

WOOF

EASY WITH THOSE TOYS, BUSTER! YOU'LL HURT SOMEONE, BUT IT WON'T BE ME!

IMPUDENT BRAT! WE'LL MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF YOU! WHA..? NO EFFECT?

I THINK YOU'LL FIND A LITTLE OF THIS MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE!

BUT MORE TIME MACHINES LAND, DISGORGING THE WARRIORS FROM THE FUTURE. THE KID HAS HIS HANDS FULL!

DESTROY HIM, STORM TROOPERS OF THE **ATOM!** HE IS **OUTNUMBERED!**

UH-OH! **MORE** OF THEM... ARRIVING EVERY **SECOND!** MAYBE TOO MANY FOR EVEN **ME** TO HANDLE... WITHOUT **ASSISTANCE!**

...BUT BY SEARCHING AT **ATOMIC SPEED**, MAYBE I CAN FIND JUST **THAT!**

THE KID QUICKLY LOCATES DICKY DAUNTLESS OF THE TRANSATLANTIC MESSENGER SERVICE...

DICKY, THERE'S **TROUBLE!** YOUR **OTHER SELF** IS NEEDED!

JOHNNY? BUT... OH WELL. IF YOU **SAY** SO...

...ALTHOUGH I'VE **TOLD** YOU NEVER TO CALL ME AT **WORK!**

SHOUTING HIS HERO'S NAME, DICKY RECEIVES THE **ATOMIC POWERS** GRANTED TO HIM BY THE GREAT **ASTRO-PHYSICIST GUNTAG BORGHELM**...

MIRACLEMAN!

HE BECOMES THE **MIGHTIEST BOY IN THE UNIVERSE... YOUNG MIRACLEMAN!**

WOOF

TOGETHER THEY FLY OFF, AND THE KID QUICKLY EXPLAINS THE SITUATION...

FIVE THOUSAND OF THEM? WHERE ARE THEY **COMING** FROM?

I DON'T **KNOW!** MAYBE THEY'LL OBLIGE US WITH SOME **ANSWERS**...

RIGHT! I THINK **THESE** TWO **BEAUTIES** MIGHT BE PERSUADED TO **TALK**...

OOPS! NOT **THIS** ONE... I'VE ACCIDENTALLY BROKEN HIS **JAW!**

BUT NO SOONER DO THE INVADERS HIT THE GROUND THAN THEY RECOVER!

I DON'T GET IT! THEY SHOULD STAY OUT FOR HOURS! I'M NOT PULLING MY PUNCHES!

NOR AM I! WHAT SAY WE GRAB ONE OF THESE CHARACTERS AND ASK SOME QUESTIONS?

GREAT IDEA! THIS GUY WILL DO FOR A START! EASY, PAL!

HOW IS IT THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO WITHSTAND OUR HAMMERING?

TERRIFIED, THE TROOPER *EXPLAINS*..

WE COME FROM *1981*... *DECADES* IN YOUR *FUTURE*! WE HAVE *WEAPONS* THAT CAN TURN WHOLE *CITIES* TO *DUST*!

"EVEN *NOW* OUR LEADER'S *ATOMIC STORM TROOPERS* ARE ARRIVING IN YOUR WORLD'S *OTHER* NATIONS. RESISTANCE IS *FUTILE*!"

PARIS.

PARIS HAS *FALLEN* TO THE *SCIENCE GESTAPO*! ON TO *WASHINGTON*!

SAIGON:

HAH! OUR *FUTURISTIC* WEAPONS BURN THEIR *HOMES* AND *CROPS*! THEY ARE *DEFEATED*!

IN THE *OFFICES* OF *THE DAILY BUGLE*, COPYBOY *MICKY MORAN* READS THE AWFUL *STOP-PRESS NEWS*...

LOOKS LIKE *MIRACLEMAN* IS NEEDED IN A *HURRY*!

...ONLY BUGLE BUN! DISASTER!!

KIMOTAY!

SPEAKING THE *SECRET KEY HARMONIC* OF THE *UNIVERSE*, MICKY *CHANGES*..

WOOF

...INTO THE MIGHTY *MIRACLEMAN*!

I'LL START BY VISITING *CORNWALL*, WHERE THE FIRST *LANDINGS* WERE REPORTED...

HE ARRIVES TO FIND *YOUNG MIRACLEMAN* AND *KID MIRACLEMAN* FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE *ARMY*...

HMM! HOW MANY *MORE* OF YOU ARE COMING?

TUT-TUT! SHOULD HAVE WORN YOUR HELMETS!

...BUT WITH *MIRACLEMAN'S* ARRIVAL, THE FUTURISTIC INVADERS ARE *DRIVEN BACK* AND FINALLY *SUBDUED*.

THOSE ARE THE *LAST TWO*. GOSH, *MIRACLEMAN*, YOU'RE *TOPS!*

THE *ARMY* CAN PUT THESE GOONS UNDER *GUARD*. WE'VE GOT *OTHER* NATIONS TO *LIBERATE!*

YOUNG, YOU HANDLE *ROME!* *KID*... TAKE CARE OF *WASHINGTON!*

YOU CAN LEAVE *MOSCOW* TO *ME!*

BUT, ONCE THE *MIRACLEMEN* HAVE *DEPARTED*...

HA HA! THESE *GUARDS* WEREN'T *EXPECTING* TO BE BOMBARDED WITH *RARE MAGNETIC GASES* FROM OUR SECRET *VIDEO RINGS!*

THERE! THEY'RE ALL *UNCONSCIOUS!*

NOW LET US *DEVASTATE* THEIR *CAMP* IN THE NAME OF THE *SCIENCE GESTAPO!*

WITH THOSE THREE OUT OF THE WAY THIS IS GOING TO BE EASY...

HAVING SUBDUED THE INVADERS IN OTHER TROUBLE SPOTS, THE MARVEL-MAN FAMILY RETURN TO SEE RENEWED FIGHTING!

HOLY MACARONI! GARRER MUST HAVE BROKEN FREE, OR MORE OF THEM MUST HAVE LANDED!

THE ARMY HASN'T A CHANCE AGAINST THE INVADERS' WEAPONS!

BANG! BOOM!

WE'LL SPLIT UP! YOU TAKE THE LEFT FLANK, THE KID WILL TAKE THE RIGHT...

WITH *YOU* IN THE *CENTRE*! MICKY, THAT'S A *MARVELLOUS* IDEA!

GOOD LUCK, BOYS! WE'LL GIVE THEM A DRUBBING THIS TIME THAT THEY WON'T FORGET IN A HURRY!

WE'LL KNOCK THEM BACK YEARS INTO THE FUTURE!

BUT, AS *GARRER* SEES *MIRACLEMAN* APPROACH...

HAH! I'LL *OUTSMART* HIM YET! BLOW UP OUR CHRONO-CRUISERS!

IMMEDIATELY, ALL THE MACHINES ARE DESTROYED!

BOOM!

WHAT'S THE IDEA BEHIND DESTROYING YOUR *SHIPS*! YOU'LL NEVER GET BACK TO *1981*!

EXACTLY! WE ARE STRANDED IN YOUR TIME, AND COMPLETELY INDESTRUCTIBLE! AS MORE AND MORE OF MY MEN ARRIVE, THEY WILL DESTROY THEIR SHIPS, TOO!

JUST THEN THE BOYS ARRIVE FROM THE FLANKS WITH BAD NEWS...

WE'RE UP AGAINST A BRICK WALL! AS FAST AS WE KNOCK THEM DOWN, THEY GET UP!

WHAT CAN WE DO TO PUT THESE GUYS DOWN?

HMM! I'VE AN IDEA. NOW LISTEN TO ME CAREFULLY...

KID, YOU STAY HERE AND DO WHAT YOU CAN, WHILE WE GO FORWARD TO THE FUTURE, TO THEIR POINT OF DEPARTURE!

OKAY, M-M! WHATEVER YOU **SAY**!

WE'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS WE CAN, KID!

GOOD LUCK! I'LL DO WHAT I CAN THIS END!

THE KID DIVES BACK INTO THE FRAY!

THAT'S FOR YOU, GARRER! YOU MAY BE INDESTRUCTIBLE — BUT YOU CAN STILL **FEEL** THIS!

HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS? IT'S MY CROSS DOUBLE PUNCH!

MEANWHILE, THE OTHER TWO RACE FORWARD IN TIME AT **ATOMIC SPEED**...

WELL, MICKY? IS THIS THE YEAR WE **WANT?**

YES, IT'S **1981**... LOOK AT THOSE **UGLY BUILDINGS!**

RIGHT! DOWN WE **GO!**

PLUS, I THINK I SEE GARRER'S **TIME MACHINES** BENEATH US! WE'VE ARRIVED **BEFORE** THEY EMBARKED FOR **1956!**

SOON THEY REACH GARRER'S LAUNCHING SITE...

WE'RE RIGHT ON TIME! THEY'RE PREPARING TO TAKE OFF!

...SHALL WILT BEFORE OUR ONSLAUGHT! SO LET'S GO!

OKAY, YOUNG, WE'RE GOING TO DESTROY EVERY ONE OF THOSE MACHINES!

TSK, TSK! THIS PLACE IS BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE A JUNKYARD!

THAT PUTS THE FINISHING TOUCH TO THE LAST ONE! THEY'RE BEYOND REPAIR!

WE'VE HALTED THE INVASION FROM THE FUTURE BEFORE IT'S EVEN ***BEGUN!***

GARRER IS FURIOUS!

WH-WHAT ARE THOSE STRANGE ***BEINGS?*** THEY'VE DESTROYED OUR ***CHRONO-CRUISERS!*** I'LL ***BUTCHER*** THEM FOR THIS!

BUT.....

TAKE ***THAT***, YOU DESPICABLE, POWER-MAD ***BRUTE!*** IT'S TIME FOR THE ***BUTCHER*** TO '***MEAT***' HIS ***MATCH!***

TUT-TUT! LOOK AT GARRER, THE WOULD-BE CONQUEROR!

THEN THE FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER ARRIVE AND TAKE THE RENEGADES INTO CUSTODY...

I'M THE COMMANDER, TWELFTH AREA, WORLD POLICE. THANKS, FRIEND!

NO, THANK YOU! JUST TAKE GOOD CARE OF GARRER!

WE WILL! THE **SCIENCE GESTAPO** HAVE THREATENED OUR SOCIETY HERE IN 1981 FOR **TOO LONG!** NOW, THANKS TO **YOU**, IT CAN BE THE **UTOPIA** IT WAS **MEANT** TO BE!

SOUNDS **GOOD.** I HOPE I LIVE TO **SEE** IT!

NOW, IF YOU'LL **EXCUSE** US, WE'LL BE GETTING BACK TO **1956!**

I WONDER WHAT THE RESULT WILL BE NOW THAT WE'VE STOPPED THEIR ORIGINAL DEPARTURE?

AND, BACK IN THE PRESENT DAY...

HEY! ONE MINUTE I'M FIGHTING DOZENS OF **MEN**, THE NEXT MINUTE THEY'VE ALL **VANISHED!**

THIS IS **CRAZIER** THAN SOME OF **DR. GARGUNZA'S** STUNTS!

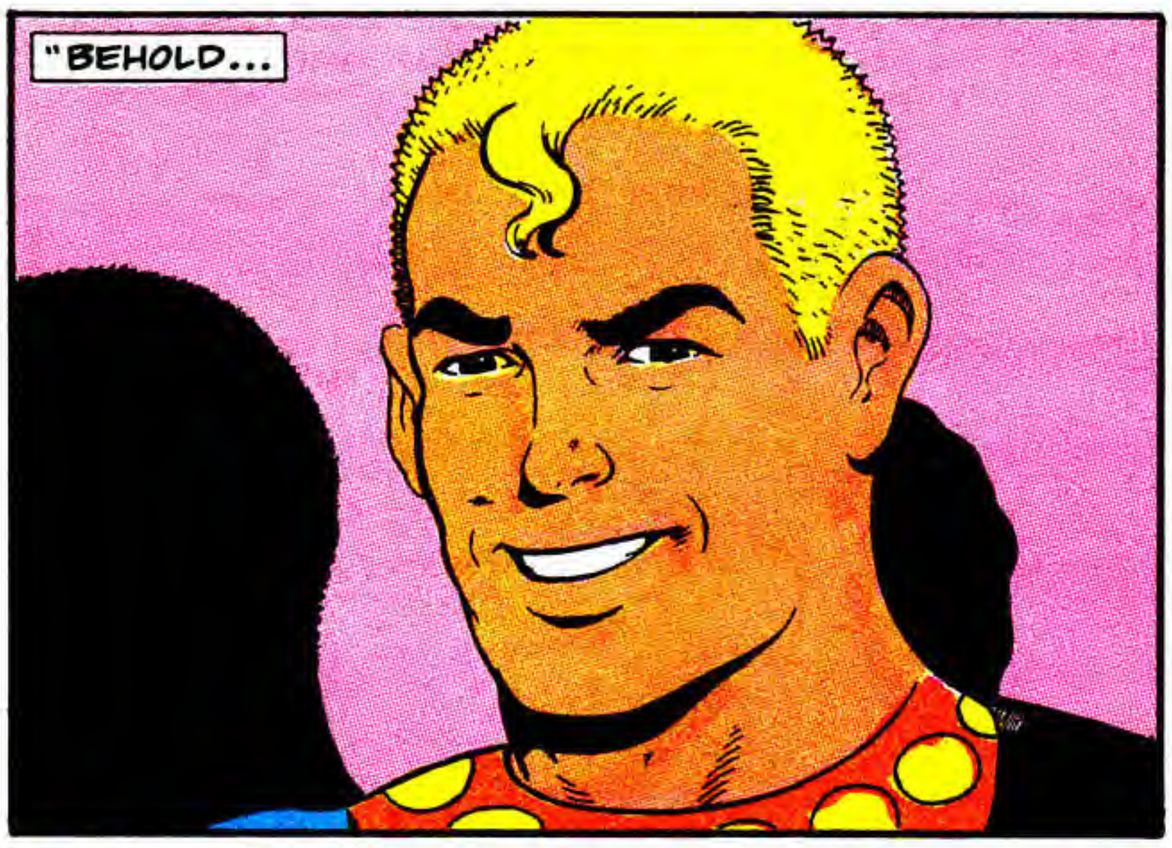
FINALLY, WHEN THE **MIRACLEMAN FAMILY** ARE **TOGETHER** AGAIN...

S-SO... **GARRER** WAS NEVER **HERE**, BECAUSE HE NEVER LEFT 1981! IT SOUNDS **UNBELIEVABLE...**

MAYBE **SO**, KID, BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT **WAS...**

...OR **WAS** IT?

HA HA HA HA HA!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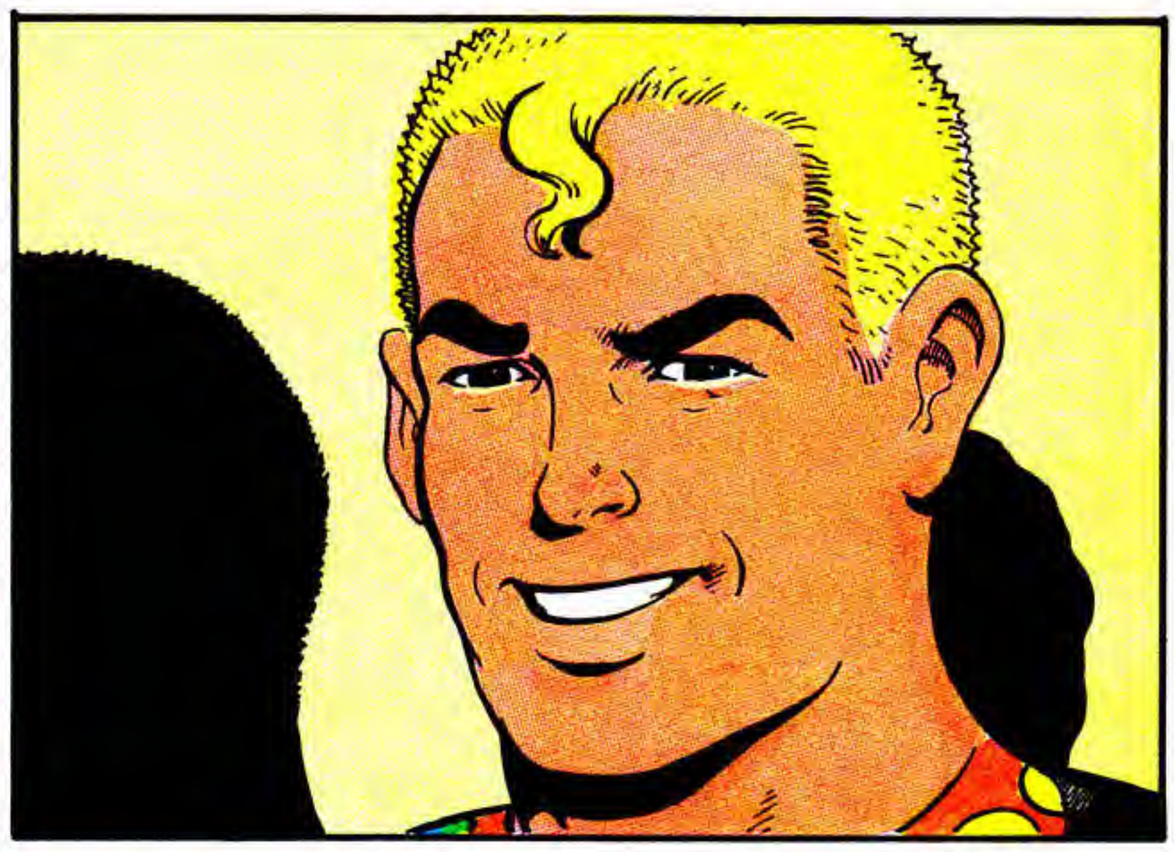
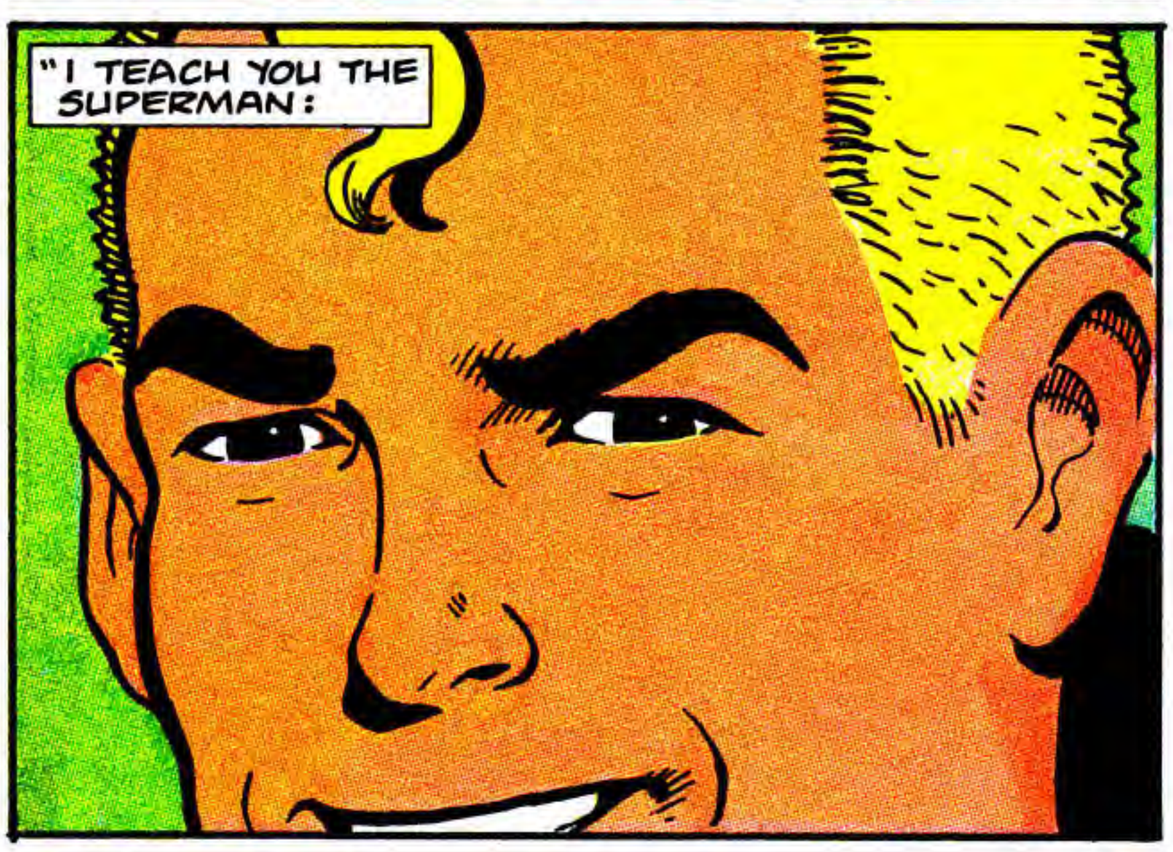
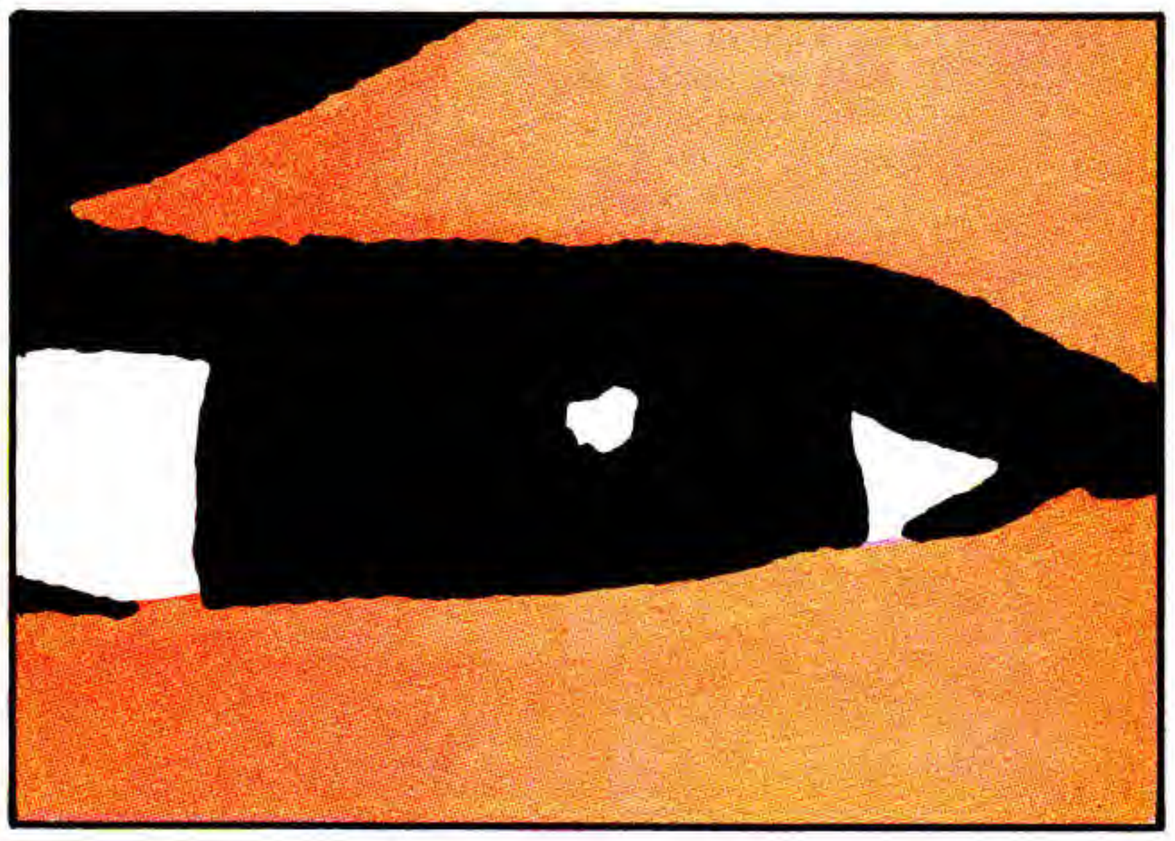
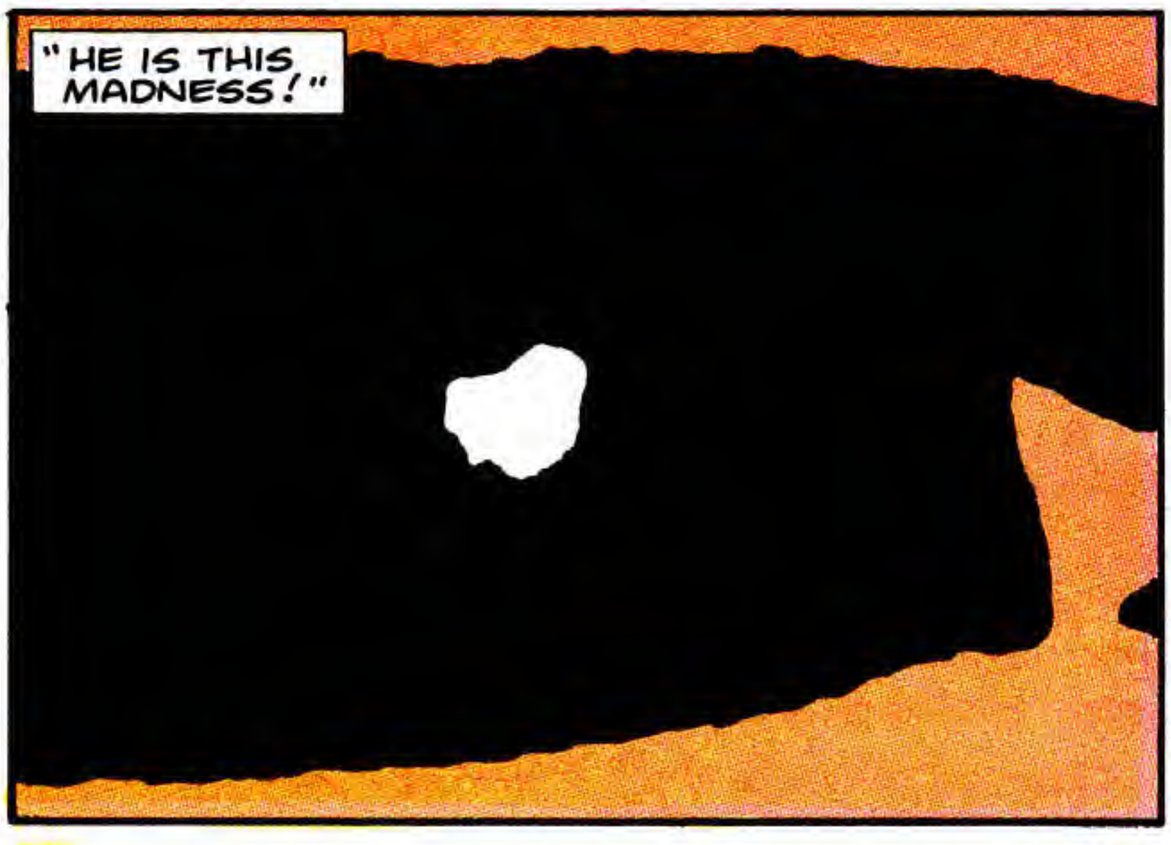



"I TEACH YOU THE SUPERMAN:

"HE IS THIS LIGHTNING...




"HE IS THIS MADNESS!"

FRIEDRICH WILHELM NIETZSCHE, 'THUS SPAKE ZARATHUSTRA.'

BOOK ONE CHAPTER 2: 1982 PROLOGUE

IN THE SODIUM-LIT HOUR BEFORE DAWN, THE GREAT TRUCKS ROLL NORTH. SOME CARRY BREAKFAST CEREAL AND SOME CARRY BALL-BEARINGS. SOME ARE **EMPTY**....

...AND SOME ARE **NOT.**

YEAH BUT, LIKE WILL THE GUYS BE **ALRIGHT** BACK THERE, STEVE? I MEAN...

...YOU MEAN YOU'RE LOSING YOUR **BOTTLE**, TREVOR ME OLD SON. `**COURSE** THEY'LL BE ALRIGHT.

IT'S THE **PLUTONIUM** THAT'S BOTHERING **YOU**, ENNIT? LISTEN...WE **LIFT** IT, WE **SELL** IT, AND WE **HOP IT**. NO **BIG DEAL**, TREV. NO BIG DEAL AT **ALL**.

YEAH, BUT **NUKES**, MAN... I MEAN, I THOUGHT WE'D BE SELLING ARMS TO, LIKE, **THE PEOPLE**. NUKES ARE REALLY **HEAVY**, KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

TREVOR, MATE, YOU'RE TALKING THROUGH YOUR **POSTERIOR**! I MET A **YANK** IN **ANGOLA** WHO SAID HE'S SEEN ONE GO UP AT **YUCCA FLATS.**

HE SAID IT WAS BLOODY **FANTASTIC**! HE SAID "STEVE, MINE **EYES** HAVE SEEN THE **GLORY**." AIN'T THAT A NICE WAY OF PUTTING IT?

UHH... ...RIGHT.

"MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY!" **HA HA**! HE WAS A COMEDIAN AND NO MISTAKE. NICE CHAP. THE COMMUNISTS SHOT HIM. SHAME REALLY...

YEAH.

CHRIST. THIS GUY'S A **PSYCHO**!

THROUGH THE COLD GREY DAWN THE TRUCKS HEAD NORTH. AND SOMEWHERE NOT FAR AWAY MICHAEL MORAN IS **SCREAMING**...

MICHAEL MORAN IS HAVING THE **DREAM** AGAIN. IT ISN'T A **GOOD** DREAM...

EDITOR DEZ SKINN
STORY ALAN MOORE
ART GARRY LEACH
LETTERS G. GEORGE

IT'S A DREAM OF SNOW AND OF FIREBALLS. A DREAM OF DEATH AND NUMBING VERTIGO...

...A DREAM OF FLYING

THERE IS NO FEAR AT FIRST...ONLY THE EERIE KEENING OF THE WIND, THE SWIRLING, SILENT BLIZZARD AND THE COLD, SHARP THRILL OF ALTITUDE...

HE IS NOT ALONE. LIKE FIREBIRDS IN RED AND YELLOW, TWO OTHER FIGURES SOAR BESIDE HIM. HE CANNOT SEE THEIR FACES!

HIS POWER COURSES THROUGH HIS VEINS LIKE MOLTEN SILVER. HIS MUSCLES MOVE WITH PRECISE GRACE BENEATH HIS SKIN. HE KNOWS HE IS INVINCIBLE...

...IT IS THEN THAT HE SEES THE VAST GREY SHAPE THAT FLOATS IN THE CHURNING WHITE. IT IS THEN THAT THE FEAR STARTS...

CONTEMPTUOUS OF GRAVITY, IT HANGS IN EMPTY SPACE BEFORE THEM LIKE A MASSIVE, BLOATED SPIDER. FILTHY WITH SOOT AND OIL IT STAINS THE AIR...

THE FEAR IS THERE, COILED IN HIS STOMACH AS HE WATCHES, UNABLE TO LOOK AWAY. THE SPIDER IS LAYING AN EGG! AN EGG THAT BURNS LIKE THE SUN...

HE SEES HIS FRIEND, THE ONE IN RED. SOMETHING BAD IS HAPPENING TO HIM... FIRST HE FLICKERS, A STROBING DOPPLER-IMAGE AGAINST THE SNOW...

...AND THEN THERE IS ONLY THE INFERNO ABOUT HIM AS HE FALLS. INEXPLICABLY, A WORD FORMS ON SCORCHED LIPS... A DREAM-WORD WITH ALIEN SYLLABLES...

LIKE GAUDY INCAUTIOUS MOTHS HIS COMPANIONS PLUNGE TOWARDS THE HORROR, LEAVING HIM IN THEIR WAKE. CAN'T THEY SEE? DON'T THEY KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

THE SKY CATCHES FIRE AND HE IS SCREAMING! SCREAMING AND BURNING...

...AND THEN HE EXPLODES!!

THE LAST THING HE HEARS IS THE SOUND OF THUNDER...

NOooo

...MNUH..

MIKE? MIKE... WHAT'S WRONG??

I HAD THE DREAM AGAIN, LIZ. I'M SORRY I WOKE YOU....

OH MIKE...

OH, CHRIST. I GOT A MIGRAINE TOO...

SHALL I PHONE THE PAPER AND TELL THEM YOU CAN'T MAKE THE LARKSMERE ASSIGNMENT? MAYBE THEY COULD SEND SOMEBODY ELSE...

IT'S TOO LATE TO DO THAT. ANYWAY, I MAKE LITTLE ENOUGH OUT OF THIS FREELANCE JOURNALISM AS IT IS...

I CAN'T AFFORD TO THROW WORK AWAY JUST BECAUSE I'VE GOT A HEADACHE.

IT'S NOT JUST THE HEADACHES, MIKE. WHAT ABOUT THE DREAMS? YOU'VE BEEN HAVING THEM FOR YEARS! MAYBE IF YOU JUST SLOWED DOWN A LITTLE...

LIZ, WE'VE THROUGH ALL THIS BEFORE. YOUR JOB NEARLY KEEPS US BOTH AS IT IS. I SHOULD BE THE ONE WHO EARNS THE MONEY, NOT YOU.

...THE DREAMS DON'T MATTER, ANYWAY.

THAT'S A SILLY ATTITUDE, MIKE. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO EARNS THE MONEY AS LONG AS...

LIZ, PLEASE! I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL, BUT I'D JUST AS SOON DROP THE SUBJECT.

...ANYWAY, I'D BETTER GET GOING IF I WANT TO BE IN LARKSMERE BY TEN. I'VE GOT TO CATCH AN EARLY...

...TRAIN NOW STANDING AT PLATFORM SEVEN WILL BE LEAVING FOR THE LAKE DISTRICT AT 6:45. PASSENGERS FOR OXENHOLME SHOULD...

I SHOULDN'T HAVE JUST SLOUCHED OUT LIKE THAT. LIZ IS RIGHT...I'M NOT IN ANY SHAPE FOR WORK TODAY. THE MIGRAINE I COULD JUST ABOUT TAKE... BUT NOT THE DREAM.

WHY CAN'T I FIGURE OUT WHAT IT MEANS?? RECURRING DREAMS MUST MEAN SOMETHING. IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER THAT DAMN WORD.

KIMONO? NO. KOMODO? NO. KRAKATOA? NO. JESUS, THIS HEADACHE. I HOPE IT'S GONE BEFORE I ARRIVE AT...

LARKSMERE. LAKELAND PARADISE OR H-BOMB HELL??

HOW'S THAT FOR A **HEADLINE**? I'M **WASTED** AS A PHOTOGRAPHER. I COULD HAVE WON THE **PULITZER** FOR MY CAPTIONS. DON'T YOU THINK SO?

OH. YEAH. RIGHT. YOU WERE THINKING ABOUT YOUR **STORY ANGLE**. IF **I** WAS YOU, I'D INTERVIEW SOME OF THEM **FRIENDS OF THE EARTH**. GOOD COPY, THAT...

ALWAYS GO FOR **HUMAN INTEREST**, I SAY. PICK OUT THE **LOONIES** AND **INTERVIEW** 'EM.

UH? SORRY PAUL... I WASN'T LISTENING...

JUST OUT ABSORBIN' ☢ SOME RADIATION!

PAUL, I'VE GOT A **HEADACHE**. I'M TRYING TO COVER THE OPENING IN MY **OWN WAY** AND I'D APPRECIATE IT IF YOU'D...

LIKE THOSE GUYS THERE WITH THE **MACHINE GUNS**...

MACHINE GUNS?? I CAN'T SEE ANY...

..MACHINE GUNS...

ALRIGHT. IF ANY OF YOU SECURITY PEOPLE START ACTING UP, WE FIRE ON THE CROWD.

DROP YOUR GUNS AND THERE'LL BE NO VIOLENCE.

GOOD!

NOW I'D LIKE EVERYONE TO SIT DOWN WITH THEIR HANDS ON THEIR HEADS. IF YOU FEEL THE URGE TO SCRATCH OR STRETCH I'D ADVISE YOU TO SUPRESS IT...

THE GENTLEMAN OF THE PRESS WILL ESCORT US INTO THE POWER STATION..

...IF EVERYONE BEHAVES, THEY'LL ESCORT US OUT AGAIN, TOO.

HEY, AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE **ALTERNATIVE PRESS** I DEMAND TO KNOW WHATS GOING **ON**, MAN.

UHH...YOU'LL FIND OUT AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE INSIDE. NOW **MOVE** IT MAN, OR I'LL HAVE TO **SHOOT** YOU...

PRESS CONFERENCE ?? WHO **ARE** THESE PEOPLE ??

INSIDE.

GENTLEMEN, YOU ARE **PRIVILEGED** TO BE PRESENT AT A HISTORIC OCCASION: **THE WORLD'S FIRST PLUTONIUM HI-JACK.**

THE **PUBLICITY** ANGLE IS **VERY IMPORTANT.** WE WILL LEAVE HERE IN TEN MINUTES WITH A NUMBER OF **PLUTONIUM ISOTOPES.** NOBODY WILL STOP US!

THE PLUTONIUM, EASILY ENOUGH TO MAKE A SCORE OF **HYDROGEN BOMBS,** WILL BE AUCTIONED AMONGST THE WORLD'S **TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS!**

A LITTLE LESS **NOISE,** PLEASE. I WANT YOU TO HEAR ALL THE DETAILS SO THAT YOU CAN CONVEY THEM TO YOUR **EDITORS,** TO YOUR **READERS** ...AND TO OUR **PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS.**

THE WORDS **CLATTER.** THE MIGRAINE **BITES** DOWN, THE ROOM BEGINS TO **SPIN...**

ALL AROUND HIM THERE ARE **VOICES**...SOME **PLEADING,** SOME **ANGRY**...

HEY... THIS MAN'S **SICK!** HE NEEDS SOME **AIR!**

HE'S **RIGHT,** STEVE. THIS GUY LOOKS LIKE HE'S GONNA **DIE.** WE BETTER GET HIM **OUTSIDE**...

...AND THEN HE IS BEING MANHANDLED DOWN A CORRIDOR. HE FEELS **DIZZY.** THERE IS **FEAR** IN HIS STOMACH...

THIS SICK ACT BETTER NOT BE A **SNOW-JOB,** CHUM. YOU UNDERSTAND?

...IT REMINDS HIM OF THE **DREAM.**

...SNOW...

HE'S DRAGGED THROUGH A SWING DOOR. GLASS GLINTS, A LEGEND FLICKERS OUT FROM THE HAZE...

...**SUDDENLY** THE **WORD** IS THERE, SWIMMING BEFORE HIM, BLURRED THROUGH THE FOG OF PAIN AND NAUSEA, BUT AS **RECOGNISABLE** AS **DESTINY**...

HIS LIPS MOVE. THE WORD IS BARELY A **WHISPER**...

...KIMOTA...

THE **WHISPER** IS DROWNED BY THE **THUNDER**! THE SCREAMS OF THE MAN CALLED STEVE ARE LOST IN THE SUDDEN FLOOD OF **LIGHT**...

ZAP

PAM

HIS FACE IS SEARED AND BLISTERED! HIS EARDRUMS HAVE BURST...

...HIS EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY!

OH JEEEZUS!! JESUS, I'M **BLIND!!** I CAN'T SEE!!! **OHH JEEZUS!**

...JESUS...JESUS...

STEVE?? STEVE, MAN, ARE YOU **ALRIGHT??** LIKE WE HEARD THAT **BANG**, AND WE...

...UHH...

WHO THE HELL ARE **YOU??**

ME? I'M... MIRACLEMAN. I'M **MIRACLEMAN!!**

I REMEMBER NOW...

MIRACLEMAN. UHH...RIGHT.

UH...OKAY, MIRACLEMAN... LET'S KEEP THIS **COOL**. LIKE, JUST TELL US WHAT YOU DID TO **STEVE**, AND LIKE, WE WON'T **HURT** YOU...

NO. YOU WON'T HURT ME. I'M **MIRACLEMAN!**

BADDUUCK

BADDUUCK

I SAID **STAY BACK!!** YOU THINK I'M **STUPID**, MAN?? YOU'RE WITH THE **S.A.S**, RIGHT? WELL I AIN'T SCARED O' **YOU PEOPLE! YOU'RE PIGS...**

...AND PIGS GET...

...**BARBECUED!!**

KAZING

ZING

ZING

OH **JESUS**, LOOK AT HIM!! I'M **SHOOTING** HIM AND HE'S **SMILING!!** HA HA HAA! THIS ISN'T HAPPENING! THIS GUY'S NOT **HUMAN!!**

THAT'S RIGHT. I'M **NOT** HUMAN.

WAOOOMM!!

AND THEN THERE IS SILENCE...

...DEATHLY SILENCE.

EIGHTEEN YEARS. EIGHTEEN YEARS, **TRAPPED** IN THAT **OLD, TIRED BODY**. IT DOESN'T MATTER.

I'M **MIRACLEMAN!**

HE SWINGS HIS HANDS TOGETHER, AND **THUNDER** BURSTS FROM BETWEEN THEM.

I'M MIRACLEMAN...

I'M BACK!!

...IT'S OVER NOW!

THE BEGINNING...

...AND NEWS IS COMING IN OF EVENTS REPORTED TO HAVE HAPPENED THIS MORNING AT THE OPENING OF A **NUCLEAR POWER STATION** IN THE **LAKE DISTRICT.** AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE BY A GROUP OF ARMED MEN TO STEAL A LARGE QUANTITY OF PLUTONIUM FROM THE STATION WHICH IS SITUATED AT **LARKSMERE**...

ALTHOUGH REPORTS ARE YET TO BE CONFIRMED, IT APPEARS THAT MANY OF THE TERRORISTS ARE NOW IN HOSPITAL SUFFERING FROM SEVERE CONCUSSION... ONE OF THE RAIDERS, A MAN IN HIS EARLY THIRTIES, IS SAID TO HAVE SECOND DEGREE BURNS. AS YET, THESE INJURIES ARE INEXPLICABLE.

A NUMBER OF WITNESSES AT THE SITE CLAIM TO HAVE SEEN A **MAN-LIKE OBJECT** RISING INTO THE SKY AT A TREMENDOUS SPEED... EXPERTS HAVE INDICATED THAT THIS WAS PROBABLY AN EXAMPLE OF MASS HYSTERIA BROUGHT ON BY THE TENSE NATURE OF THE SITUATION.

A FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHER AT THE SITE, MR. PAUL DUNCAN, SUBMITTED A PICTURE OF WHAT DOES APPEAR TO BE A HUMAN FIGURE IN FLIGHT ALTHOUGH...

HE LOOKS LIKE A **GOD**. THE WORDS DRY UP, TURNING TO **ASH** IN HER MOUTH.

MIRACLEMAN

BOOK ONE CHAPTER 3

SHE'S **DREAMING**. EVEN AS SHE BACKS AWAY, SHE **KNOWS** SHE'S DREAMING...

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?? YOURE NOT MY HUSBAND!

NO. HE ISN'T. HE CAN'T BE. AND YET...

LOOK AT ME, LIZ...

NOT MY BODY, LOOK AT ME.

..I...

...AND YET THE VOICE, THE EYES...

IT HAS BEEN SIXTEEN YEARS SINCE LIZ SULLIVAN MARRIED MICHAEL MORAN.

SHE KNOWS HIM WITH HER EYES, HER EARS, HER BODY...
SHE KNOWS HIM!

AND YET...

M-MIKE??

MIKE, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU??

HE HOLDS HER, AND HIS TOUCH IS AS FRICTIONLESS AS MERCURY. THE RESTRAINED POWER IN HIS ARMS MAKES HER FEEL LIKE GLASS.

SIT DOWN. I'LL MAKE SOME COFFEE.

TH-THANK YOU.

"I'LL MAKE SOME COFFEE." THE WORDS ARE SO MUNDANE, SO REASSURINGLY NORMAL. YET HE LOOKS LIKE A GOD.

OVER COFFEE...

OKAY. WHEREVER I START THIS WILL SOUND UNBELIEVABLE, SO I MAY AS WELL GO STRAIGHT IN AT THE DEEP END...
WHEN I WAS FOURTEEN IN 1954, I WAS WORKING AS A COPY BOY FOR A PAPER CALLED THE DAILY BUGLE.

I WORKED HARD AND MADE A LITTLE MONEY, AND ONE NIGHT...

"...I HAD A VISION." HIS VOICE IS LIKE A POOL OF GOLD... DAZZLING, MESMERIC. AS HE DESCRIBES THAT DREAMLIKE EVENING, TWENTY SEVEN YEARS PAST, HIS VISION BECOMES HERS...

SHE SEES THE BOY **COWERING** BEFORE THE **IMPOSSIBLE SPECTRE** THAT HAD CONJURED ITSELF FROM THE NIGHT...

GREETINGS, MICKEY MORAN! I AM GUNTAG BORGHELM!

I AM AN ASTRO-PHYSICIST WHOSE STUDIES HAVE TAKEN HIM FAR BEYOND THE DULL CONCERNS OF MERE MORTALS.

THE KEY HARMONIC OF THE UNIVERSE IS MINE TO COMMAND... A WORD WHICH, WHEN SPOKEN, BESTOWS GODLIKE POWER UPON THE SPEAKER. THIS IS MY GIFT TO MANKIND.

YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN, MICKEY MORAN! FOR YOUR COURAGE. FOR YOUR HONESTY. SPECIAL POWERS ARE YOURS TO BE USED FOR THE GOOD OF HUMANITY!

HOLY MACARONI!

B-BUT WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ME?

YOU NEED ONLY SPEAK THE WORD "KIMOTA!"

K-KIMOTA??

IN HER VISION SHE HEARS THE DEAFENING PEAL OF **THUNDER**, FEELS THE WIND FROM **BEYOND** LASH THE BOY'S TREMBLING BODY... SHE SEES HIM **TRANSFORMED**.

IT'S **IMPOSSIBLE!** I'M... I'M...

...WHAT **AM** I?

YOU ARE **MIRACLEMAN**, CHAMPION OF JUSTICE AND ENEMY OF EVIL! USE YOUR POWERS WISELY, MY SON, FOR NOW I MUST BID YOU.... FAREWELL!

"...AND THEN HE WAS **GONE**. IT WAS LIKE COMING OUT OF A **DREAM**... BUT I HAD **PROOF** THAT IT HAD BEEN REAL."

"I FOUND I COULD **FLY**, THAT I HAD **TREMENDOUS STRENGTH**. I WAS **INVULNERABLE** TO ALL HARM... I WAS **MIRACLEMAN!!**

LIZ? YOU'RE **LAUGHING**. WHAT'S WRONG?

I'M **SORRY**, MIKE... BUT THAT'S SUCH A BLOODY **STUPID** STORY!

CAN'T YOU **SEE** IT? AN '**ASTRO PHYSICIST**' POPS UP AND TELLS YOU THE '**KEY HARMONIC OF THE UNIVERSE**'... WHICH JUST **HAPPENS** TO TURN YOU INTO A **MUSCLE-MAN** IN A **BLUE LEOTARD?** I'M SORRY, MIKE, I REALLY AM, BUT THAT'S JUST SO **STUPID!**

I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. ACTUALLY **SAYING** IT OUT LOUD LIKE THAT, IT DOES SOUND...WELL...PRETTY **UNLIKELY.** I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT **BEFORE.** BUT I **HAD** TO BELIEVE IT, DON'T YOU **SEE?** I **WAS** MIRACLEMAN! I **WAS** A BEING OF ALMOST UNLIMITED POWER!!

AND I WASN'T THE ONLY ONE. WITHIN A YEAR I WAS JOINED BY ANOTHER YOUNG MAN WITH '**ATOMIC POWERS**' LIKE MINE. HIS NAME WAS **DICKY DAUNTLESS...**

YOU'RE LAUGHING AGAIN.

OH, **MIKE!** DICKY **DAUNTLESS??** THAT WAS HIS **NAME??** COME OFF IT!

I-I'M SORRY... PLEASE GO ON.

"DICKY ONLY HAD TO SAY THE WORD '**MIRACLEMAN**' AND HE BECAME **YOUNG MIRACLEMAN.** HE HAD POWERS LIKE MINE. HE WAS MY **FRIEND.**"

"WE FOUGHT CRIME TOGETHER UNTIL **1956,** WHEN WE WERE JOINED BY..."

MIRACLEDOG?

LIZ, **PLEASE!** THIS MAY, DAMN IT...THIS **DOES** SOUND SILLY IN 1982, BUT IN THE FIFTIES IT MADE **PERFECT** SENSE. THIS IS HOW I **REMEMBER** IT. THIS IS HOW IT **HAPPENED.**

IN 1956 WE WERE JOINED BY **JOHNNY BATES.** HE WAS A LITTLE KID OF MAYBE SEVEN OR EIGHT. WHEN HE SAID MY NAME HE BECAME **KID MIRACLE-MAN.** THEY CALLED US THE **MIRACLEMAN FAMILY.**

"DURING THE YEARS WE WERE TOGETHER WE FOUGHT THE STRANGEST VILLAINS OF ALL TIME..."

"VILLAINS LIKE THE **FIREBUG** AND **YOUNG NASTYMAN**...DON'T SAY A WORD...AND THE MOST TROUBLESOME OF THE LOT, THE FREAKISH DWARF GENIUS CALLED **DOCTOR GARGUNZA...**"

"TIME AND TIME AGAIN WE THWARTED HIS INSANE PLANS AND JAILED HIM. BUT SOMEHOW HE ALWAYS CAME **BACK...**"

"AND YET HE NEVER DID ANYTHING REALLY **EVIL...**"

"IT WAS ALMOST AS IF WE WERE ALL PLAYING A **GAME.** A GAME WHICH **NEITHER** SIDE TOOK ENTIRELY **SERIOUSLY.**"

THEN HOW DO YOU EXPECT **ME** TO? LOOK... I'LL **ACCEPT** THE FACT THAT YOU'RE SOMEHOW A **FOOT TALLER**, YOU'RE **TWENTY YEARS YOUNGER** AND YOU'RE **STILL** MY HUSBAND. LORD KNOWS **WHY**, I JUST **WILL**.

BUT ALL THIS **OTHER** STUFF. **MIRACLEMAN FAMILY? YOUNG NASTYMAN?**

I-I DON'T **KNOW.** MAYBE THEY **HUSHED IT UP** OR SOMETHING, BECAUSE OF...

BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED IN 1963.

MIKE, IF THERE HAD **REALLY** BEEN A MIRACLEMAN IN THE FIFTIES, WOULDN'T I HAVE **HEARD** ABOUT HIM??

DON'T TELL ME... A COUPLE **MORE** MIRACLEBOYS TURNED UP AND YOU FORMED A **FOOTBALL TEAM!**

DAMN YOU, LIZ, YOU'RE LAUGHING AT MY LIFE!!

THE FLOORING IS **SOLID OAK**. HE SPLINTERS IT TO **MATCHWOOD**...

...AND SHE BELIEVES.

I-I'M SORRY. I D-DIDN'T REALISE... WHEN I SAW YOU...

IT DOESN'T MATTER. EVEN IF ALL I'VE SAID **SO FAR** SOUNDS LIKE A **JOKE**, WHAT HAPPENED IN '63 MOST DEFINITELY **WASN'T.**

"IT WAS ONE DAY IN OCTOBER WHEN THE MIRACLEMAN FAMILY RECEIVED THE ALERT. **GARGUNZA** HAD SOME KIND OF **SKY FORTRESS**. HOVERING OVER THE **NORTH SEA.**"

"WE SAW THE FORTRESS, HANGING IN THE SKY LIKE SOME BLOATED **SPIDER**. STRAIGHT AWAY MY FLESH BEGAN TO CRAWL. SOMETHING WAS **HORRIBLY WRONG**..."

"I HUNG BACK. I **KNEW** THERE WAS SOMETHING **TERRIBLE** CONCEALED IN THAT THING...SOMETHING THAT COULD **HURT** US. I **TRIED** TO WARN THE OTHERS BUT IT WAS NO USE."

"IT WAS **SNOWING** AS WE SET OFF... SNOWING **HARD**. BUT WE WERE IN HIGH SPIRITS. IT WAS A **GAME**, JUST LIKE OUR **OTHER** ADVENTURES. NO-ONE EVER GOT **HURT.**"

IT WAS AN **A-BOMB**, LIZ. AN **A-BOMB!**

IT WASN'T A GAME ANYMORE.

"THE BLAST HIT ME... AND IT HURT. NOTHING HAD **EVER** HURT ME BEFORE. AS I FELL I STARTED TO BLACK OUT, BUT BEFORE I DID I CAUGHT SIGHT OF **DICKY**. DICKY WITH THE **STUPID** NAME..."

"THERE WERE **TWO** OF HIM, **TWO BODIES** CRUSHED INTO **ONE**. AND HE WAS **SCREAMING**. I COULDN'T **HEAR** HIM, BUT HE WAS **SCREAMING**.

WHEN I WOKE UP IT WAS TWO MONTHS LATER. I WAS **MICKEY MORAN** AND I WAS IN **HOSPITAL**. I'D BEEN FOUND IN THE **SUFFOLK MARSHES** WITH **TERRIBLE BURNS** AND MOST OF MY **BONES** BROKEN.

I MANAGED TO PIECE MY LIFE BACK TOGETHER AGAIN AS LITTLE MICKEY MORAN... BUT I DIDN'T **REMEMBER** THAT I HAD EVER **BEEN** MIRACLEMAN... NOT UNTIL NEARLY **TWENTY YEARS LATER**. NOT UNTIL THIS MORNING, AT THE POWER STATION.

THEN THAT **STORY** ON THE NEWS, ABOUT THE **FLYING MAN**... THAT WAS **YOU.**

DRINK YOUR COFFEE BEFORE IT GETS COLD AND I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT...

...AND AS LIZ MORAN LISTENS, EYES WIDE WITH **FEAR** AND **WONDER**, HER COFFEE GROWS COLD ANYWAY. AND SHE **BELIEVES.**

WHILE IN A DARKENED OFFICE, NOT TOO FAR AWAY...

...PICTURE OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE A **HUMAN FIGURE** IN FLIGHT, BUT MAY MERELY BE A HURTLING FRAGMENT OF **DEBRIS** CAUSED BY...

10:21

MIRACLEMAN!

HE'S BACK!

BACK TO **SPOIL** EVERYTHING!

A DOOR SLAMS SHUT. A T.V. BABBLES INTO AN EMPTY ROOM. IT HAS **BEGUN**...

AND MAY THE LORD HAVE MERCY UPON US ALL.

MIRACLEMAN
BOOK ONE CHAPTER 4

THE BRITTLE FEBRUARY SUNLIGHT FALLS ON LIZ MORAN... WARM, ASLEEP, AND THIRTY SIX YEARS OLD...

LIZ MORAN, FORMERLY ELIZABETH SULLIVAN. LIZ MORAN, PROFESSIONAL ILLUSTRATOR AND DEVOTED WIFE...

LIZ MORAN, SIXTEEN YEARS A MARRIED LADY. HER LIFE IS HAPPY, COMFORTABLE, AND RESOLVED...

IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE LIZ MORAN WAS SURPRISED BY WHO SHE WOKE UP NEXT TO...

HER SKIN REMEMBERS A TOUCH THAT CRACKLED LIKE BARE WIRES. HER EYES REMEMBER HIS EERIE, PHOSPHORESCENT GRACE...

SHE REMEMBERS THE NIGHT BEFORE. AND SHE BELIEVES.

SHE WALKS FROM THE BEDROOM TO THE LOUNGE, DRIFTING, SMALL FEET SILENT ON THICK CARPET...

PAUSING, SHE TOUCHES THINGS

...A CHINA ORNAMENT, THE POLISHED WOOD OF A TABLETOP. TOUCHING, SHE RE-ESTABLISHES CONTACT WITH THE WORLD. SLOWLY RETRIEVING HER SENSE OF...

BRRRRRIIINNGGG

...REALITY.

HELLO? YES? YES, THAT'S RIGHT, I'M MRS MORAN. WHO DID YOU SAY..?

I'M AFRAID HE'S STILL ASLEEP. DID YOU WANT TO RING BACK OR...

NO. NO, THAT'S ALL RIGHT.

I'LL CALL HIM...

MIKE!! HE WON'T BE A MOMENT. I THINK I CAN HEAR HIM GETTING OUT OF...

SKRKK

...BED...

HE'S...UH...JUST COMING. I'LL HAND YOU OVER TO HIM...

HELLO? YEAH, THIS IS MIKE MORAN. YES, THAT'S RIGHT. LISTEN, I'M SORRY BUT I DIDN'T GET YOUR NAME. WHO DID...

YOU'RE JOKING. JOHNNY?! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!! I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

HOW DID YOU... YOU SAW THAT ITEM ON THE NEWS? YEAH, WASN'T IT? BUT HOW DID YOU SURVIVE THAT...

OH, THE PHONE. NO, SURE I UNDERSTAND. BUT CAN I SEE YOU... YEAH, I KNOW THE PLACE. YOU..? YOU OWN IT? JESUS CHRIST. NO, I JUST... YES. OF COURSE. WE'LL BE OVER IN AN HOUR OR TWO.

BYE.

WELL, I THINK WE BETTER SKIP BREAKFAST AND SHOWER READY TO GO OUT. WE'VE BEEN INVITED TO LUNCH BY THE PRESIDENT OF SUNBURST CYBERNETICS, A MR. JONATHAN BATES...

FORMERLY KID MIRACLEMAN.

"When Johnny comes marching home..."

LATER...

THIS IS INCREDIBLE! I MEAN, JUST THAT HE'S STILL ALIVE IS INCREDIBLE. BUT OWNING SUNBURST CYBERNETICS INTO THE BARGAIN, THAT'S REALLY...

...A LOT MORE FUN THAN BEING DEAD.

RATS. LOOK AT THE SKY. I THOUGHT TODAY WAS GOING TO BE NICE...

THUNDERHEADS, IRON-BLACK IN THE BLUE DISTANCE. THE AIR IS SUDDENLY DRY AND HEAVY. THE SKY HOLDS ITS BREATH...

IT'S COMING THIS WAY. AND IT'S A MONSTER.

HIS OFFICE IS ON THE TOP FLOOR. THEY KNOCK. HE CALLS THEM IN. HE STANDS BEFORE A PICTURE WINDOW, LONDON SPRAWLED SUBMISSIVELY BEHIND HIM. HE SMILES. HE SPEAKS...

MIKE.

MIKE, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU.

JOHN.

JOHN, OH, JESUS.

THE CRACKLING DARKNESS ROLLS TOWARDS THEM ACROSS THE SKY. LIKE A GREAT BLACK BULL, STUPID WITH PAIN, ITS FLANKS PIERCED BY SILVER DARTS...

IT'S COMING THIS WAY...

A GIRL BRINGS THEM BLUE MOUNTAIN COFFEE, AND THEY TALK ABOUT ALL THE STRANGENESS IN THEIR LIVES. THEY SPEAK SOFTLY. IT'S BEEN EIGHTEEN YEARS...

...AND FOR ALL THAT TIME YOU HAD NO IDEA WHO YOU REALLY WERE? THAT'S INCREDIBLE.

EIGHTEEN YEARS. TO THINK IT'S BEEN EIGHTEEN YEARS SINCE THAT DAY WHEN WE ALL FLEW OUT TOGETHER...

"...INTO THE SNOW. OCTOBER THE TWELFTH, 1963. EIGHTEEN YEARS AGO..."

"AS I RECALL, I WAS IN THE LEAD. SO I WAS THE FIRST TO APPROACH THE THING. I SWOOPED LOW OVER ITS DECKS, LOOKING FOR SOME KIND OF LIFE..."

"NOTHING. NO NOISE, NO MOVEMENT. JUST SNOW DRIFTING AGAINST GREY STEEL."

"...AND THEN, SUDDENLY, I GOT A STRANGE TINGLING SENSATION. I KNEW THAT SOMETHING TERRIBLE WAS JUST ABOUT TO HAPPEN."

"EVERY NERVE IN MY BODY WAS SCREAMING FOR ME TO GET OUT OF THERE. IN PANIC I VEERED WILDLY UP INTO THE SKY. HIGHER AND HIGHER I CLIMBED. FASTER AND FASTER..."

"I NEARLY DIDN'T MAKE IT."

"LIKE YOU, I WOKE UP IN HOSPITAL SEVERAL DAYS LATER, SUFFERING FROM CONCUSSION AND BURNS."

ONLY I HADN'T LOST MY ***MEMORY***... I'D JUST LOST MY POWERS.

FOR SEVEN BRIEF YEARS I'D BEEN SOMETHING MORE THAN HUMAN. THEN, ALL OF A SUDDEN THE MAGIC WENT AWAY...

...I WAS HUMAN AGAIN. AND MY FRIENDS WERE DEAD... OR SO I THOUGHT. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ADJUST AT FIRST TO BEING AN ORDINARY SIXTEEN YEAR OLD KID AGAIN. BUT I DID. I HAD TO.

I DISCOVERED I WAS GOOD WITH ELECTRONICS, AND EVENTUALLY DECIDED TO SET UP A SMALL BUSINESS, WORKING FROM RENTED ACCOMODATION. IT SAVED MY LIFE.

I DID WELL. PHENOMENALLY WELL. WITHIN SEVEN YEARS I'D MANAGED TO FOUND SUNBURST CYBERNETICS. WE'VE BEEN VERY LUCKY. WE'VE MADE A LOT OF MONEY.

NOW, NINE YEARS LATER, WE HAVE BRANCHES ALL OVER THE GLOBE. IRONIC, ISN'T IT? TO HAVE LOST ONE SORT OF POWER ONLY TO FIND ANOTHER?

ONE WHICH HAS ITS RESPONSIBILITIES, I'M AFRAID. LIZ... MIKE... WILL YOU EXCUSE ME FOR FIVE MINUTES? THERE'S SOME LETTERS THAT NEED SIGNING...

GO AHEAD, JOHN. WE'RE FINE.

WELL? WHAT DO YOU THINK TO HIM?

WHAT DO YOU ***THINK*** I THINK? I THINK HE'S FASCINATING, MAGNETIC AND QUITE SEXY IN A SINISTER SORT OF WAY. LUCKY FOR YOU I PREFER UGLY MEN.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE HE WAS SIXTEEN. HAS HE CHANGED MUCH?

YES. YES HE HAS.

HE'S CHANGED A LOT.

HE RETURNS, HE TALKS...TALKS WONDERFULLY. HIS VOICE IS SOFT AND YET POWERFUL, LIKE THE TREAD OF A STALKING TIGER.

UNEASY, MIKE MORAN CAN HEAR IT, PROWLING AROUND THE PERIMETER OF THEIR CONVERSATION. A TIGER, CIRCLING, CLOSING IN...

IT'S COMING THIS WAY. AND IT'S A MONSTER...

ANYWAY, ENOUGH ABOUT ME. HOW ABOUT SOME LUNCH?

YEAH, SURE...

UH, LIZ... DO YOU THINK I COULD JUST SPEAK TO JOHN ALONE FOR A MOMENT?

LIZ MORAN NODS, SMILING AS THE TWO MEN STEP OUT ON TO THE BALCONY. SHE WONDERS WHAT MIKE NEEDED TO SAY THAT WAS NOT FOR HER EARS... SUPERHERO TALK.

STORM'S BREWING UP NICELY. IT'S A BEAUTY, ISN'T IT?

JOHN...

JOHN, I LISTENED TO YOUR STORY JUST NOW... RAGS TO RICHES, REDEMPTION THROUGH HONEST TOIL. IT'S A GREAT STORY.

I REALLY WANTED TO BELIEVE IT, JOHN.

"...BUT THEN HALFWAY THROUGH I GOT THIS FUNNY IDEA INTO MY HEAD. I THOUGHT "WHAT IF HE'S LYING?" I TRIED TO GET RID OF IT. I TRIED. BUT I COULDN'T."

"I THOUGHT "WHAT IF HE DIDN'T LOSE HIS POWERS? WHAT IF HE SURVIVED THAT BLAST THAT TOOK OUT ME AND DICKEY AND WAS ***STILL*** KID MIRACLEMAN??"

OH, SURE, YOU COULD TAKE HIS NAME, HIS IDENTITY... BUT YOU COULD STAY AS KID MIRACLEMAN FOREVER. YOU COULD HAVE IT ALL... MONEY, PRESTIGE, FAME...

YOU COULD SEVER ALL YOUR LINKS WITH HUMANITY. YOU COULD BECOME REMORSELESS, UNSTOPPABLE...

...AND TOTALLY CORRUPT. IS THAT IT, JOHN? IS THAT WHAT HAPPENED? YOU'RE STILL KID MIRACLEMAN, AREN'T YOU?

"I CAN TELL BY YOUR VOICE, BY THE WAY YOU STAND... YOU'RE NOT HUMAN, JOHN. I CAN FEEL IT."

I TRIED TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD ***FEEL*** LIKE... TO BE SIXTEEN YEARS OLD AND THE MOST POWERFUL CREATURE ON THE FACE OF THE PLANET...

...AND TO BE ANSWERABLE TO NO-ONE. YOU COULD DO ANYTHING, JOHN. YOU'D NEVER NEED TO TURN BACK TO DULL, WEAK, HUMAN JOHNNY BATES EVER AGAIN.

TIGER EYES, CIRCLING. DARK CLOUDS GETTING CLOSER...

DARK CLOUDS, SCUDDING INTO HIS MIND, VAST AND SMOTHERING... AND A TIGER VOICE, SOFT IN THE JUDDERING HEART OF THE STORM...

MIKE, YOU'RE BEING PARANOID. YOU SEE THAT, DON'T YOU?

PARANOID? BUT I...I... Y-YES. I SUPPOSE YOU'RE RIGHT. I... DON'T KNOW. SO DIFFICULT TO THINK ALL OF A SUDDEN, SO HARD TO...

JOHN?

J-JOHN... ARE YOU DOING SOMETHING TO MY MIND..?

IT'S HERE, BLACK AND TERRIBLE INSIDE HIS SKULL. ITS TENDRILS ROIL BEHIND HIS EYES, DRAGGING HIM DOWN INTO THE DARK WITH NO DISTRACTIONS.

...NO INTERRUPTIONS.

MIKE, I'M SORRY BUT IF WE DON'T LEAVE SOON THE CAR WILL HAVE A TICKET AND...

THE CLOUDS WITHDRAW, UNCERTAIN, AND FOR A MOMENT THE LIGHT OF REASON FLOODS INTO HIS MIND ONCE MORE. HE SUDDENLY KNOWS WHAT HE MUST DO...

MIKE!

MIKE! YOU PUSHED HIM!

YOU PUSHED HIM OVER THE BALCONY!! MIKE? MIKE, WHAT HAVE YOU...

OH...

THE COLD LIGHTNING OF FEAR SKEWERS THEM, AND THEY FEEL THE TERRIBLE HUNGER IN THE HEART OF THE STORM...

OH MY GOD !!

THEY SEE THE SMILE ON THE FACE OF THE TIGER.

TO BE CONTINUED.